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## REVIEWS

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*The Promise of American Life.* By HERBERT CROLY. New York: Macmillan, 1909. Pp. 468.

Conscious national purpose, not automatic destiny; self-discipline, not merely economic freedom; devotion to intellectual and technical efficiency for disinterested ends, not merely greed of wealth and power; the specialized few loyal to the mediocre many and trusted by them—these are the underlying, reiterated themes of this important volume. The author, an editor of *The Architectural Record*, a Cornish (N. H.) colonist, a friend of Mr. Winston Churchill, is not a professed historian, publicist, or social scientist. He does not overvalue endowed research and teaching—the “subsidized word” (p. 402)—but he proves himself to be a singularly intelligent student of his country’s history and problems. His keen insight, firm grasp, and sane spirit are equally fatal to blatant, unthinking optimism and to cynical despair.

A partial summary will best reveal the scope and purpose of the book. Until very recently America has fairly well fulfilled its early promises of economic prosperity, political liberty, and a natural equality. But a new situation has rapidly developed, conditions are changing, and the old fatalistic policy of drift, the blind faith in “manifest destiny,” must be replaced by a constructive national purpose. Three traditions come down from the past, and blend and conflict in curious ways. Hamilton wrought for the efficient few, and desired a federal power to insure economic stability, to give scope to the enterprising and to undertake national tasks. He saw clearly the social value of strong, capable men, he distrusted the masses and unwittingly he caused the central government to be regarded as the ally of property interests. Jefferson, confusing individualism with liberty and local control with democracy, started a persistent traditional antagonism to the federal power, while Jackson exalted the unspecialized, average citizen of the frontier into the type of true American to whom the highly trained man seems at once a personal affront and a public menace. The rapid industrial changes have forced differentiation. The business specialist, the political specialist, the labor unionist are at once products and

factors in a new situation which demands a new national ideal to minimize ruthless exploitation and class conflict. Reformers are hampered by lack of united effort. They are confused by inconsistent traditional theories, and lack insight into the actual meaning of the rapidly changing order. Reconstruction based upon a "popular sovereignty" which no written constitution can permanently dominate, must create a national power equal to national needs. This power must discriminate constructively in favor of the capable and useful but only on the condition that these are loyal to the national welfare. Effective nationality involves a certain infusion of democracy. England, France, and Germany afford instructive examples of different combinations of aristocracy and democracy. America is committed to the largest proportion of the latter. Nationalization is something more than centralization, and something different. Centralization is necessary for tasks of national scope and to deal with activities organized on a national basis. Governmental centralization is an effect rather than a cause. The states are to be deprived of functions not because they perform them badly but because in the nature of things they cannot perform them effectively. Reconstruction must be positive not negative. To eliminate corruption is not necessarily to secure efficiency. The state governments should be so modified as to fix responsibility and offer scope to able men. Control of corporations and of labor unions, taxation, etc., must all be guided by a constructive national purpose. Education is highly regarded in the United States but the educated are lightly esteemed. The true education aims at discipline, the wise interpretation of experience and disinterested devotion to a worthy cause. The sense of efficiency and pleasure in work must gradually supplant the selfish greed for wealth. America needs freedom of thought, release from the tyranny of mediocrity. Emancipation of the individual means responsibility for leadership. Standards must be raised; technical excellence insisted upon. The leader must make himself interesting and convincing to the masses, and must wage ceaseless warfare against privilege and intellectual insincerity. Thus the many and the few must work together united by a national purpose. "The common citizen can become something of a saint and something of a hero, not by growing to heroic proportions in his own person, but by the sincere and enthusiastic imitation of heroes and saints, and whether or not he will ever come to such imitation will depend upon the ability of his exceptional fellow

countrymen to offer him acceptable examples of heroism and saintliness" (p. 454).

This summary takes no account of many digressions and collateral studies in themselves extremely able and illuminating. A brief but significant study of Lincoln, "government by lawyers" (p. 137), acute characterizations of Bryan, Jerome, Hearst, and Roosevelt, rapid, suggestive surveys of England, France, and Germany, a keen analysis of the Monroe doctrine, a discussion of the international peace movement, the control of corporations, regulation by commissions, the recognition of labor unions, the weaknesses of civil-service reform—all fall within the limits of the book. Several of these subjects are frankly called digressions; all of them are germane to the chief purpose. In one sense the materials of this book are largely familiar. It contains nothing startling—unless an obvious skepticism as to the sanctity of the constitution and open-mindedness about federal centralization and possible government assumptions of monopolistic functions are to be so reckoned—and little that is actually new and original. It is in the arrangement and interpretations of the facts and ideas that Mr. Croly makes a contribution of undoubted value. In a style, always clear, frequently picturesque, and occasionally eloquent he sets forth convincingly the task which the past imposes on the present to plan nationally for the future. The book chimes with many significant notes which are being sounded in these days. The author appeals to the efficient few through whom he hopes to influence the many.

Although Mr. Croly uses no technical terms, makes no allusion to social theory and might resent any suggestion that his book is tainted with social psychology, it is nevertheless true that he constantly offers comments and points out principles which are of the greatest interest to those who are studying the phenomena of social groups and their forms of control. The book will take its place in the literature of group psychology as well as among the best studies of society in the United States.

GEORGE E. VINCENT

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*Les Principes de l'évolution sociale.* Deuxième édition revue et augmentée. Par DICRAN ASLANIAN. Paris: Felix Alcan, 1909. Pp. xxiv+296. Paper, 6 francs.

In a somewhat personal preface the author describes the steps by which a seminar paper on "The Rôle of Railways in the Develop-